



State Capitol | Lansing, Michigan 48913
PH (517) 373.6960 | FAX (517) 373.0897
www.senate.michigan.gov/gop/senator/jelinek/

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Contact: Sen. Ron Jelinek
1-866-305-2121

Sen. Jelinek wins added protections for educators' reputations

LANSING — School employees would get additional protection for their reputations because of the efforts of Sen. Ron Jelinek, R-Three Oaks, also a former educator.

“The good names of school employees should be protected,” Jelinek said. “Misdemeanor convictions that do not make a teacher unfit to teach don’t need to be aired publicly.”

On the Senate floor, Jelinek successfully pushed for changes to legislation to exempt certain misdemeanor convictions from the state’s Freedom of Information Act. Under Jelinek’s amendment to House Bill 5675, school districts would get the full list of misdemeanor convictions but then could decide whether certain misdemeanors, such as minor in possession violations, would be attached to the names of school employees.

The bill specifies that certain records would only be exempt for 15 business days after the date the record was received by a school district, intermediate school district, public school academy or nonpublic school. After that period, the records concerning sexual or physical abuse, and any felony conviction would be subject to disclosure under the Freedom of Information Act.

The bill now heads back to the House of Representatives for consideration of the Senate’s changes.

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